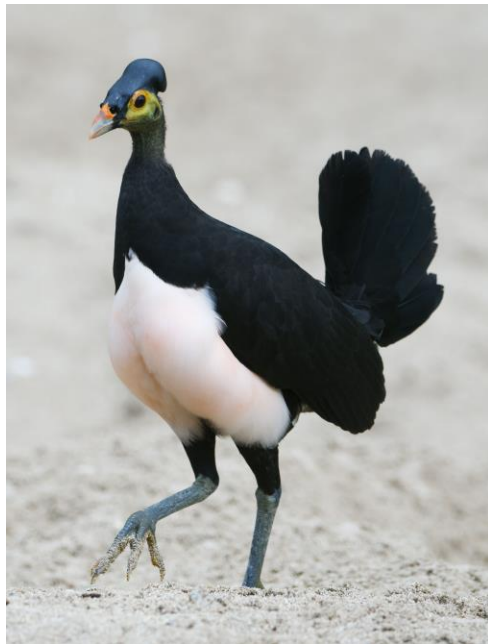




ALTO Update December 2021: You Did It!

First the bad news: this past week, the International Union for Conservation of Nature – the international body that tracks the status of all the world's species – uplisted the maleo bird, *Macrocephalon maleo*, from "Endangered" to "Critically Endangered" (CR), because of its precipitous decline across its range. CR is the highest category of concern for any wild species. This is not good news for the maleo.



And there is more. The maleo lives only on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia. Indonesia is the world's largest supplier of nickel, and most of that comes from Sulawesi. With the recent worldwide surge in demand for nickel and other minerals for electric vehicle batteries, maleo populations are going to face drastically increased destruction of their native forest habitat due to an explosion of mining activity. Thus more bad news for the maleo.

Uplisted: the Maleo is now Critically Endangered across its range. Photo: Kevin Schafer

But now some good news. *YOU have already made a huge difference to help this critically endangered species recover.* In Tompotika, thanks to your support, ALTO's partnership with local communities has increased maleo populations four-fold and three-fold at two sites. Although it's in free-fall elsewhere, in Tompotika the maleo is actually *recovering!*

Recently, the government of Indonesia declared November 21 as World Maleo Day. For the first time, the AIto team had the opportunity to facilitate large-scale celebrations of Sulawesi's mascot, the maleo bird, in Luwuk, Tompotika's gateway city.



World Maleo Day, 21 November: Traffic slowed and passers-by gave the thumbs up to this Maleo and his supporters. Though most of the banners were in Bahasa Indonesia, it turns out that some maleos also speak English!

It was great fun. Together with volunteers and a costumed maleo, the AIto team passed out stickers and information in the town center. Special events were held at the local university. The team was featured on a radio show. The regional government installed huge "megatron" screens at various locations, and ran a continuous loop of maleo videos and speeches by dignitaries, including one solicited from AIto Director Marcy Summers. There was a coordinated blast of postings about the maleo on Facebook, with "likes" too numerous to count. And articles in the local newspapers covered it all.



Five members of the AIto team were interviewed on local radio for World Maleo Day

But perhaps the greatest reverberations came from the AIto-organized "Maleo Love Letter." Maybe you signed it: prior to November 21st, you should have received an e-mail inviting you to join with others around the world in signing on to a letter expressing love and appreciation for the maleo, and congratulating the Bupati (Regent) of the Tompotika area for presiding over the world's healthiest wild maleo site.

While half of the AITo team were facilitating the aforementioned festivities in Luwuk on World Maleo Day, the other half were five hours away at our Libuun protected maleo nesting ground, awaiting the coming of the Vice-Bupati's wife, *Ibu Halima*, who arrived with a retinue of sixteen cars' worth of helpers to make her first-ever visit to see a wild maleo bird.



Ibu Halima was thrilled to see her first wild maleos at AITo's Libuun site.

At the nesting ground, Ibu Halima carefully climbed to the viewing blind, and gazed transfixed as dozens of critically-endangered wild maleo pairs performed their egg-laying ritual before her eyes. So taken was she with the maleos that she had her staff record a video of her on site at the nesting ground, and ordered that the megatrons in Luwuk be extended for another day so that her video could be added to the loop.

And Ibu Halima *loved* the Maleo Love Letter. She was utterly tickled by the fact that people from all over the world had signed on. In fact, while what she saw was just a printed paper version we were preparing to present to the Bupati, Ibu Halima took the idea and ran with it. "Put a binding on it and make it into a book," she urged. "A thousand maleo lovers from around the world! Fantastic!" "And don't just give it to the Bupati, give it to all the dignitaries in the regency. We want them *all* to know that the world loves maleos!" And in the days since, Ibu Halima has become an enthusiastic and invaluable AITo ally – a new friend for the maleo and conservation.

"*Semangat!*" - "Hooray!" Ibu Halima's visit to the protected nesting ground inspired her to record a video in support of maleos that was broadcast on megatron screens to the entire city.



HATI-HATI SAAT MENAIKI MENARA!
PLEASE BE CAREFUL ON THE TOWER!

- Pengelola tidak bertanggung jawab atas kecelakaan yang mungkin terjadi
- Maksimal 3 orang
- Dilarang merokok
- Jangan ribut
- Climb tower at your own risk
- Maximum 3 persons in the tower at a time
- No smoking
- Quiet, please!



YOU Did This! The "Maleo Love Letter" grew to become a bound book with signatures and "maleo love" comments from 1164 people in 61 countries.

So, you have done it! We reached and blew past our goal of a thousand signers (1164), and the "Maleo Love Letter" book is a compendium of admiration, enthusiasm, dedication, and pride from Maleo Lovers not just in Indonesia, but from 61 countries across the globe. It's had tremendous positive ripples all over the region. Leaders in government, industry, the press, and all corners of society have contacted AITo to express their delight at the Love Letter, pride in the Tompotika conservation successes, and support for the idea that maleos should continue to be protected. In fact, one industry executive even offered to pay for a big meeting to discuss establishing a regional regulation – on top of the national laws protecting maleos – to promote maleo conservation.

The maleos are going to need it. It's going to take more than love letters and meetings to protect these unique, wondrous, and critically endangered birds and their forest home from the new mining threat. But through the Maleo Love Letter, on World Maleo Day the message came through loud and clear: not only Sulawesi, not only Indonesia, but the *whole world* loves the maleo, and thinks the task of saving it is a worthy one.

Thank you for sending that message so loud and clear!

Marcy Summers
Director, Alliance for Tompotika Conservation (AITo)

We must get right to work on the saving. In the face of the new mining threat, your support for AITo is needed now more than ever. Please consider making a special year-end donation to turn World Maleo Day and the Maleo Love Letter into stronger protections for the maleo and its rainforest home.